United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/823
7 February 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Environmental consequences of Gulf conflict discussed at United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) inter-agency consultation in Geneva; Head of UNEP characterizes oil spill in area as largest in history.

- International Committee of Red Cross to send second convoy to Iraq carrying emergency medical supplies.

- Sea-level rise and desertification threats among issues discussed by Committee negotiating climate change framework convention.

- United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control contributes $420,000 to finance technical assistance project for Hungarian drug control units.

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Representatives of some one dozen United Nations agencies and other bodies have expressed extreme concern about the immediate and long-term environmental threats caused by the continuing Persian Gulf hostilities in an ecologically fragile region that supports some 10 million people.

Environmental consequences of the conflict were discussed at a first two-day inter-agency meeting convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Geneva. At the meeting, which ended yesterday, the participants concluded that the damage could have serious consequences for a long time to come and could jeopardize appropriate development in the region.

The UNEP and the other agencies represented at the consultation felt there was a need for more detailed information to accurately assess all the possible environmental consequences. Meanwhile, they were actively providing assistance as requested, to the extent possible.

The situation is currently being monitored by the Global Resources Information Database of UNEP (Geneva) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and a UNEP/IMO task force is presently in the region conducting an extensive preliminary assessment. The participants stressed the grave immediate and potential long-term implications of this disaster.

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For information media--not an official record

At a press briefing at Headquarters yesterday, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mostapha K. Tolba, characterized the oil spill as the largest in history, with some 60 million gallons of oil affecting an area of about 350 square miles, or over 900 square kilometres just off Kuwait's shores.

Mr. Tolba said UNEP had prepared a three-point plan of action in an effort to start the clean-up of the oil pollution. The plan consisted of a request for information as to the precise size and nature of the disaster, the emergency meeting in Geneva, and an on-site study currently being prepared by three senior UNEP officials.

The UNEP Executive Director told correspondents that the agency sought to achieve an objective and independent assessment by the United Nations of what exactly was the magnitude of the spill and what actions were needed.

In addition to the major oil spill, Mr. Tolba said another -- about half a mile in size -- had resulted from fighting over a town taken by Iraqi forces and later regained by the allies. He added that UNEP had received information alluding to a possible third oil spill in an Iraqi port, but as yet there were no firm details.

The UNEP Executive Director said he had also told his agency to follow any potential environmental danger that could come from other sources, such as the release into the atmosphere of chemicals or gases stemming from biological weapons which could live in the atmosphere for 40 to 50 years. The UNEP had also requested that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stay alert for signals of extra radiation, he said.

Asked by correspondents how long the clean-up might take, Mr. Tolba replied that it depended on the degree to which hostilities prevented action from being started. As for the cost involved, support in terms of finances and equipment forthcoming from the United States, Canada, Japan, Brazil and Saudi Arabia, and from companies such as Aramco, was sufficient to deal with the situation without any additional cost.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will dispatch to Iraq on Saturday, 9 February, a second convoy carrying emergency medical supplies and equipment to improve conditions of sanitation.

The first such convoy, carrying 19 tonnes of medical supplies, was sent to Baghdad on 31 January.

The Red Cross reported today that part of this second consignment had been donated by the Iranian Red Crescent, which would also provide the International Committee with logistic support as far as the Iran/Iraq border.

Other convoys with medicines and food were due to follow next week to build up stocks of emergency supplies in Baghdad for the most vulnerable groups among the civilian population in Iraq and Kuwait, the Committee said.

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The Red Cross reported that its delegation in Baghdad, now comprising eight people, will be joined by the delegates accompanying the convoys and will thus be in a better position to meet all its humanitarian obligations.

* * *

The threat to low-lying and small islands States from global warming and sea-level rise, as well as the desertification of many of Africa's least developed countries, were among the issues raised yesterday by the Committee currently negotiating a framework convention on climate change in Washington, D.C.

Among the speakers, Finau A. Mara (Fiji) associated his delegation with the statement made on behalf of small island States. He said the industrialized countries must make deep, significant and immediate cuts in their emissions of greenhouse gases. Countries responsible for the emissions must bear the burden of preventive action and assist non-contributors in making the necessary adjustments through appropriate technical and financial assistance measures. His country, for its part, had been carrying out extensive reafforestation for nearly 20 years, and more than 100,000 acres of plantation forests had been established.

The Pacific subregion, he said, had been subjected to some of the worst forms of exploitation over the past century and a half. Nuclear testing, the incineration of chemical stockpiles, the dumping of toxic and other wastes and driftnet fishing persisted in the region. He believed that all the ingredients necessary for arriving at a framework convention on climate change were present, as was the political will to make it a reality. The very survival and existence of the island countries was at stake.

Speaking for Italy, Giorgio Reitano pledged his country's contribution to the trust fund set up to help developing countries participate in the negotiating process. He announced that Italy would host an international symposium in Milan next July on the prospects of environmentally sound energy.

In addition, he said the Ministers for Environment of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), at their meeting in Paris last week, had pledged "to co-operate with developing countries to enable them to take the necessary measures to address climate change".

* * *

The United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) will contribute $420,000 for a technical assistance project to help law enforcement agencies in Hungary entrusted with the task of controlling drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

The agreement covering the project was signed in Vienna today by Giuseppe de Gennaro, Executive Director of the Drug Fund , and Vilmos Cserveny, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations Office at Vienna.

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The Fund's assistance to Hungary is aimed at developing a more effective fight against illicit drug trafficking, especially heroin, which is transported through the Balkans. It is thus part of a wider strategy of the Fund which is expected to involve all the major transit countries linked to the Balkan route. A key element of the strategy is creating an effective infrastructure for co-ordination among these countries in the fight against illicit drug trafficking.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

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8 February 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses sorrow at failure of diplomacy to resolve Persian Gulf crisis and consequent necessity to resort to force; calls for intensified diplomatic efforts, respect for humanitarian law, assistance to affected civilians.

- European Community informs United Nations of its intentions to ease sanctions adopted against South Africa in 1986.

- UNICEF appeals for $110 million for aid to African countries struck by drought, civil strife and economic hardship.

- Negotiating Committee on climate change convention ends debate; hears urgent appeal by Kuwait to international community to help save its environment.

- Director-General of UNESCO, prompted by Gulf war, appeals for "scrupulous observance" of obligations and duties under Hague Convention for Protection of Cultural Property in Event of Armed Conflict.

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The Security Council this afternoon continued its informal consultations on the Persian Gulf conflict. In a statement before the Council, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar stated that he had watched the developments of the past 23 days "with anguish and regret". He said that, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, he could not but be "saddened by the failure of diplomatic efforts, including my own, and the consequent necessity to resort to force".

The Secretary-General stated that he had hoped, until the last moment, that the situation between Iraq and Kuwait could be solved peacefully. He said it was in a final effort to avert hostilities that he had appealed publicly on 15 January to President Saddam Hussein to signify his readiness to comply with the Council's resolutions.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

There was no indication as yet that Iraq had reconsidered its position, he said. The hostilities continued, despite the diplomatic efforts of a number of Governments and his own. A massive military confrontation was under way in the region, with immense implications for Iraq, Kuwait and the world as a whole. The Secretary-General emphasized that that should not mean that diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis should be put on hold. On the contrary, he said, they needed to be intensified.

Now that the crisis had entered a new phase, the Secretary-General wished to draw attention to the appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), issued on 1 February, which pointed out that millions of civilians had been caught up in violence, without shelter or protection against occupation and bombing. He said he increasingly felt that the United Nations system should provide whatever humanitarian assistance it could, both to refugees and to displaced persons, and to the civilian population in the area.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar, in closing, stated that he had received numerous expressions of despair -- in letters, press editorials and appeals -- regarding the "tragic dimensions and incalculable consequences of the conflict. This is a testing moment for the Organization", he said.

* * *

The 12 member States of the European Community have informed the United Nations of their intention to relax sanctions against South Africa. They had decided in December that as soon as action was taken by the South African Government to repeal the Group Areas Act and the two Land Acts, they would make such a move.

With the announcement by South African President F.W. de Klerk regarding the repeal of the discriminatory legislation, they said, a new path was opened "towards the complete and irreversible abolition of apartheid and the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa". Under those circumstances, the Community would prepare the necessary steps to ease the set of sanctions it adopted against South Africa in 1986.

The position of the Twelve was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter from Ambassador Jean Feyder of Luxembourg, their current Chairman.

The Chairman of the Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), said earlier this week that pressure on South Africa should be maintained during the process of future negotiations towards the preparation and adoption of a new constitution. A rush to lift restrictive measures now, he said, "would have the effect of prematurely depriving the international community of the possibility of applying appropriate pressure if necessary, at a later stage".

In a related development, Botswana has urged the Government of South Africa to accelerate the pace of reform. In a statement transmitted to the Secretary-General, the Government of Botswana said President De Klerk's speech

contained "some positive elements as well as some elements that show little or no progress". For instance, it said, the speech was silent on the questions of violence and the release of political prisoners -- a point which was also raised by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid.

* * *

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today appealed to the international community for $110 million to respond to non-food needs of African countries battered by drought, civil strife and a worsening economic plight.

The Fund said in a communiqué issued at Headquarters, that the appeal was part of the continuing global effort by the United Nations to alert the international community to the worsening situation in many African countries. More that 20 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Malawi and Liberia were prey to famine this year, UNICEF said.

The UNICEF expressed concern in the communiqué that, while the world was focusing on the Gulf crisis, the restructuring of Eastern Europe and other international problems, vitally necessary resources might not be available for Africa.

* * *

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a framework convention on climate change yesterday heard an urgent appeal by Kuwait to the international community to help save its environment. The Committee yesterday concluded its general debate on preparations for the elaboration of an instrument on climate change.

During the debate, which began on Tuesday, 5 February, speakers focused on the urgency of addressing the issue of global warming, the need for a comprehensive approach to climate change, and the provision of energy-efficient technologies to developing countries to enable them to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as they develop their economies.

The threat to low-lying and small island States from global warming and a sea-level rise, as well as the special needs of African countries affected by desertification and drought, were also raised. Everyone agreed that a framework convention on climate change should be ready for signing during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil.

* * *

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Frederico Mayor, said yesterday in a statement issued at Headquarters that the events arising from the occupation and annexation of Kuwait and the military operations had caused great damage and claimed large numbers of civilian victims in Iraq and Kuwait. The growing scale of the confrontation was seriously threatening the life and security of

all the countries and peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people, he said.

Referring to UNESCO's ethical and moral role, Mr. Mayor appealed for scrupulous observance of the obligations and duties imposed by international law, and, in particular, by the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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DH/825
11 February 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council to hold formal meeting on question of Persian Gulf conflict, Wednesday 13 February.

- Secretary-General to visit Canada to address opening session of International Conference on Air Law, and to meet Canadian Prime Minister.

- Commission for Social Development to discuss social consequences of rapid changes in Eastern Europe; 1994 Year of Family; activities relating to youth, aging, disabled.

* * *

The Security Council is scheduled to hold a formal meeting at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 February, to discuss the current conflict in the Persian Gulf. On the day of the meeting, the Council will hold informal consultations expected to begin at 11 a.m.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in an appeal during Council consultations last Friday, called for intensified diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. He also drew the attention of Council members to an appeal by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of 1 February, stating that millions of civilians had been caught up in violence, without shelter or protection against bombing and occupation. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said the United Nations system should provide whatever humanitarian assistance it could, both to refugees and to displaced persons, and to the civilian population in the area.

In a separate development, Syria has informed the United Nations of its economic distress as a result of the Security Council's sanctions against Iraq. The Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dia-Allah El-Fattal, transmitted, on 31 January in a letter to the Secretary-General, a national study saying that Syria was facing losses totalling over $2 billion stemming from the international community's embargo against Iraq and Kuwait.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Syrian Ambassador requested the Security Council to consider the case as soon as possible in order to alleviate the situation which has affected the country's income in foreign trade, tourism, financial transfers and oil.

In other communications, Romania has informed the Organization of its decision to send a surgical hospital and medical staff to Saudi Arabia on a humanitarian mission.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 8 February, the Romanian Ambassador to the United Nations, Aurel Dragos Munteanu, said his Government would also dispatch a Romanian Army chemical decontamination unit. The decision, he said, was based on the resolutions of the Security Council -- in particular resolution 678, which set the 15 January deadline, and which requests all States to provide appropriate support for the actions undertaken to liberate Kuwait and to restore international peace and security in the area.

* * *

A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General will travel to Canada tomorrow, 12 February, to deliver an address to the opening session of the International Conference on Air Law at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar will then travel to Ottawa for a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in the afternoon. The Secretary-General is expected to return to New York tomorrow evening.

* * *

Today in Vienna, the United Nations Commission for Social Development has begun its session at which it will consider the social consequences of the rapid political and economic transformations in Eastern Europe, among other things. The Commission will also discuss the effects of ethnic violence and the changing structure of the traditional family.

The Commission's session this year is being held at a time when the conflict in the Gulf is modifying expectations for peace and disarmament. The so-called "peace dividend" of detente between East and West -- a reallocation of resources from military to civilian uses -- may not be as high as first hoped, the Commission was told in a report on the world social situation.

In reviewing the world social situation, the Commission will also consider the critical situation of African countries suffering from drought, civil strife and adverse international economic conditions.

Among other items on the Commission's agenda are preparations for the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. The United Nations Office at Vienna has been charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating the international activities for the Year.

The Commission, which meets every two years, acts as an advisory and preparatory body for the Economic and Social Council. It advises the Council on policies to promote social progress and on practical measures for social welfare and community development.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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DH/826
12 February 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Permanent Representative of Kuwait reiterates appeal for basic health care which is being denied Kuwaiti civilian population by Iraqi authorities.

- Secretary-General welcomes draft convention of International Conference on Air Law which, he says, will improve substantially international law on terrorism.

- International Labour Organisation (ILO) appeals for funds to help countries affected by return of Gulf migrants.

- Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs says crisis in Persian Gulf is likely to have devastating social and humanitarian impact in years to come.

* * *

The Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad A. Abulhasan, this afternoon briefed correspondents at Headquarters on the current situation in his country under Iraqi occupation.

Mr. Abulhasan said basic health care was still being denied the Kuwaiti population by Iraqi authorities. Kuwait had repeatedly appealed to various international agencies and humanitarian organizations to arrange for a shipment of emergency supplies to civilians in that country, but all efforts had failed thus far, due to Iraqi intransigence, he said. The Ambassador emphasized that Kuwait was not against humanitarian aid to Iraqi civilians; all his country was asking for was that the Kuwaiti population not be forgotten.

Mr. Abulhasan said United Nations humanitarian organizations should press Iraq to allow relief shipments to Kuwait by making any emergency aid to Iraqi civilians conditional on allowing equal assistance in Kuwait.

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For information media—not an official record

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, on a one-day visit to Canada, today delivered an opening statement to the International Conference on Air Law which is being held at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal.

Emphasizing the significance of the Conference, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said it was not limited to the safety of aviation, but included also the global fight against terrorism and the need for enhanced co-operation. The draft convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection, which is before the Conference for approval, would represent a substantial development of international law on fighting international terrorism, he said.

The Secretary-General said legal instruments could not be viewed as a panacea for terrorism, but each one helped to build a more secure world. He hoped that all countries would become parties to the prospective new treaty on plastic explosives and that it would come into force without delay.

The Secretary-General was scheduled to meet Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney this afternoon, and will return to New York this evening.

* * *

The Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Michel Hansenne, has issued a new appeal for international help to countries affected by the return of migrant workers fleeing invasion and war in the Persian Gulf.

Over $1 million were committed by Canada, Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) after the ILO chief launched a first appeal last November.

Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen have requested immediate ILO assistance in coping with the resettlement and employment problems created by the sudden return of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers.

Mr. Hansenne said the funds available to ILO at this point were not sufficient to cover the growing number of requests.

Of the more than 2.8 million migrant workers and members of their families who were in Iraq and Kuwait before the Gulf crisis, 2 million are now estimated to have left the area. Over 450,000 Egyptians and 250,000 Jordanians have returned to their countries.

The authorities of both countries have told ILO not only of considerable difficulties in the resettlement of returning migrant workers, but of enormous financial losses suffered by their economy.

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In a separate development, Djibouti has informed the United Nations that it is facing losses of some $225 million by the end of March this year as a result of international sanctions imposed against Iraq and Iraqi occupied Kuwait.

The Permanent Representative of Djibouti, Roble Olhaye, in a letter to the Secretary-General, asked the Security Council to begin consultations on an urgent basis, in order to find a solution to his country's economic problems.

The Djibouti Ambassador said the economic losses resulted from decreased income in foreign trade, increased oil prices, higher importation and transport costs, and suspension of projects funded by Kuwait and Iraq.

* * *

The Commission for Social Development is currently meeting in Vienna to debate the world social situation. Later it will consider preparations for the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

Addressing the Commission yesterday, Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, Rafeeuddin Ahmed, said the crisis in the Persian Gulf was likely to have a devastating social and humanitarian impact. The Gulf crisis came as a rude awakening in the midst of the historic changes in Eastern and Central Europe.

The Under-Secretary-General stressed that there was an urgent need for international humanitarian and financial relief for the most seriously affected countries and peoples. For years to come, he said, the Commission would be occupied with responding to the social and humanitarian consequences of the war.

Citing recent studies, he said there had been substantial improvements in the global social situation, with the exception of certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America where standards of living and social conditions had deteriorated in the last 10 years.

As the general debate got under way, many speakers stressed that the gap between rich and poor countries was a source of international stability and tension. Speakers drew attention to such issues as legal protection for the rights of the disabled, the problems of a growing world population of elderly and the concern that the conflict in the Persian Gulf would adversely affect the social development of poor countries.

The Commission, which meets every other year, is scheduled to conclude its two-week session on Wednesday, 20 February.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/827
13 February 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council decides to meet tomorrow in formal private session on situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

- Secretary-General deplores loss of civilian life following reports of allied bombing of a defence shelter in Baghdad which apparently caused hundreds of civilian casualties.

- Secretary-General discusses with Canadian Prime Minister proposals for United Nations peace-keeping role and reconstruction of Gulf region once hostilities have ended in area.

- Secretary-General appeals for immediate resumption of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected civilian population of Angola.

* * *

The Security Council this afternoon convened a meeting on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and, following a procedural discussion, voted by 9 in favour to 2 against (Cuba, Yemen), with 4 abstentions (China, Ecuador, India, Zimbabwe) to discuss the matter in a formal private meeting scheduled for 11 a.m. tomorrow, 14 February.

Members voting in favour of holding debate behind closed doors were Austria, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Romania, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States and Zaire.

Today's meeting was convened in response to requests made last month by the representatives of Cuba, Yemen and the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) that the Council hold a public meeting on the situation in the Gulf region.

Proposing this afternoon that the Council hold a private debate, the representative of the United Kingdom said such a format would allow a careful

(more)

For information media—not an official record

consideration of all developments away from the glare of publicity. The Council should do nothing to detract from its unity of purpose or to blur the signal being sent to the outside world.

Opposing the United Kingdom's proposal, the representative Yemen said that to discuss the situation behind closed doors was in contravention of the traditional democratic and transparent character of United Nations proceedings. Cuba, also in opposition to the United Kingdom proposal, recalled that the Council had adopted 12 resolutions on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait in full view of television and the press.

Statements in explanation of vote on the proposal were made by the representatives of the Soviet Union, the United States, India, Austria, France, Belgium, Ecuador and Zaire.

Tomorrow's meeting will be the first time the Council has met formally in private on a substantive issue since 1975, when it convened to consider the situation in Western Sahara. Prior to that meeting, it held formal private meetings in 1974 on Cyprus and in 1973 on the Middle East.

By the decision adopted today, the Council also decided that a verbatim record of the meeting would be circulated as an unrestricted document in accordance with the Council's rule 49 of its provisional rules of procedure, which states that "... the verbatim record of each meeting of the Security Council shall be made available to the representatives of the Security Council and to the representatives of any other States which have participated in the meeting not later than 10 a.m. of the first working day following the meeting".

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his Spokesman that he had learned with profound regret about the reports of today's bombing of a defence shelter in Baghdad that apparently caused hundreds of civilian casualties, including many women and children.

While the Secretary-General did not have full details about the circumstances of this tragic incident, he was, none the less, dismayed by the magnitude of the casualties and deplored the loss of civilian life, the Spokesman said.

The Spokesman also announced that Ambassador Thomas Pickering of the United States had met this morning with the Secretary-General to show him some aerial photographs and documents which were said to show that the United States and members of the international coalition co-operating with Kuwait were targetting military installations and not civilian locations in Iraq.

* * *

A United Nations official said today that the Secretary-General had met yesterday in Ottawa with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney with whom he discussed Canadian proposals for the establishment of a United Nations

peace-keeping force once the war is over. They also discussed proposals for a conference of legal experts to strengthen international law against pollution as a weapon of war and a United Nations-sponsored global summit on the instruments of war and weapons of mass destruction.

The official said discussions between the Secretary-General and Mr. Mulroney concentrated on the post-war period and a possible role for the United Nations in the field of peace-keeping and reconstruction of the region once hostilities have ended. While Mr. Perez de Cuellar and the Canadian Prime Minister agreed that it might be considered premature to deal with the post-war period at this particular moment, the Secretary-General found it important for the Organization to be in a position to act decisively when needed, the official said.

* * *

The Secretary-General said today through his Spokesman that he was "deeply concerned" about the continued suspension of the Special Relief Programme for Angola and its impact on some 2 million innocent victims seriously affected by drought and civil conflict. He appealed to the Angolan Government to take the action necessary to permit the immediate resumption of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected civilian population of Angola.

In December last year, less that nine weeks after the first relief convoys began operating, the Government suspended relief convoys going to areas controlled by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) -- its political opponent. The Government cited UNITA actions which hampered the distribution of assistance to the affected population. Given the nature of he Programme which required access to all the affected population, the United Nations had no choice but suspend its special relief operations.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar was convinced that given the commitment of the Government and of UNITA to the basic terms of the Programme, the difficulties could be resolved so that the relief activities could be resumed. The basic terms include guarantees for the relief assistance to be neutral and available to all civilian population, and the safe passage of personnel.

In an effort to bring about a resolution of the present stalemate, the Secretary-General has asked James O.C. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, to undertake a mission to Luanda as soon as possible to consult with the Government.

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DH/828

United Nations

Press Release

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DH/828
14 February 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council holds private meeting on situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

- Joint United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization mission to go to Baghdad on Saturday, 16 February.

- UNESCO experts fear land war might imperil Mideast historic sites.

* * *

The Security Council this afternoon met in private on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait following a procedural discussion, which took place during informal consultations earlier today.

The decision to meet behind closed doors was taken at a meeting last night by a recorded vote of 9 in favour to 2 against (Cuba, Yemen), with 4 abstentions (China, Ecuador, India, Zimbabwe). Those voting in favour of holding the debate behind closed doors were Austria, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Romania, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States and Zaire.

In a separate development, a United Nations official said today that Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar had been asked by correspondents upon entering Security Council consultations this morning to comment on recent charges by Iraqi authorities. In reply, the Secretary-General said that he did not think the attack on him was very courageous because he, the Secretary-General, was the least aggressive and the least important of all their enemies. He was not going to respond to the insults.

Asked if a possible cease-fire would be discussed at the Council meeting this afternoon, the Secretary-General replied that he did not think a cease-fire at this stage without a firm Iraqi commitment to withdraw from Kuwait would be acceptable to countries working together with Kuwait. The United Nations official said that when asked about the Soviet initiative to send an envoy to Baghdad, the Secretary-General had replied that any proposal for a peaceful solution to the crisis had to be encouraged.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

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The heads of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have decided, in consultation with Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, to send a joint humanitarian mission to Baghdad on Saturday, 16 February.

The mission will deliver emergency medical supplies for children and mothers in all areas of under Iraqi control, and will seek to ascertain essential health care needs.

The WHO Director-General, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, and the UNICEF Executive Director, James Grant, have agreed that the mission will leave for Baghdad from Teheran.

It is expected to remain in Iraq for about one week. Meanwhile, arrangements are being made to ensure the safety and protection of all members of the mission.

The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), currently operating in Iraq's four neighbouring countries -- Jordan, Iran, Syria and Turkey, reported yesterday that it is short some $3 million to enable it to complete its relief programme. The UNDRO said that in view of extensive obligations already undertaken, donors were requested to transfer pledges as soon as possible.

* * *

Cultural property experts from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have voiced fears that thousands of historic sites across the Middle East were now in danger.

In a press release made available at Headquarters today, the Chief of UNESCO's International Stands Section, Lyndel Prott, said the concern applied to the whole area, not just Iraq and Kuwait. He drew attention to the Islamic sites of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, and an estimated 10,000 sites of archeological importance in Iraq.

All Mideastern countries are parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which calls on bellingerents to protect cultural sites. Mr. Prott, who monitors the observance of the Convention, said that although the United States and the United Kingdom were not parties, they teach its principles to their armed forces.

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DH/829

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/829
15 February 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary General reacts to reports of Iraqi statement mentioning possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait if certain conditions are met.

- Security Council continues private meeting on Persian Gulf situation.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar this morning reacted to reports of an Iraqi statement, mentioning the possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait if certain conditions are met.

On arrival at United Nations Headquarters, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said in reply to questions by correspondents that the Iraqi suggestion, which mentioned withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait for the first time, needed to be studied carefully.

Asked if he was disturbed by the Iraqi linkage between the Iraq/Kuwait conflict and the Palestinian question as one condition for withdrawal, the Secretary-General replied again that the proposal needed careful consideration.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said that the United Nations was prepared to assist and supervise in case of such a withdrawal and that contingency plans had been worked on since the beginning of the conflict.

* * *

The Security Council continued this afternoon its private meeting on the situation in the Persian Gulf.

Speaking to the press before entering the Council, the Permanent Representative of Yemen, Abdella Saleh Al-Ashtal, said the Iraqi announcement this morning, mentioning the possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait, was a major breakthrough. He said the Council should look for ways to implement its resolutions in order to have a peaceful end, now that the Iraqis were saying that they would withdraw from Kuwait.

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For information media—not an official record

Also talking to the press at Headquarters, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, called the announcement "fundamentally contradictory and flawed", because the conditions were all "unacceptable". He expressed hope, however, that the Iraqi communication was an indication that the word withdrawal was now in the Iraqi vocabulary. Sir Hannay made it clear that the document was not in any form going to be the basis for a peaceful settlement or agreement.

This morning, after Council consultations, the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, told correspondents that "the positive news from Iraq" had been received with satisfaction and hope in Moscow. The statement was however contradictory and needed careful consideration. Ambassador Vorontsov said his Government was looking forward to a visit of a representative of President Saddam Hussein to Moscow.

* * *

In a separate development, members of the military coalition against Iraq continue to keep the United Nations informed about its operations in the Persian Gulf conflict.

The United Kingdom's Ambassador to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay, informed the Security Council President yesterday in a letter that air action had been directed exclusively at military objectives, using precision weapons wherever possible, particularly in areas where there might be civilians near the targets. He said all targets were carefully selected either because they posed a threat to coalition forces or because they supported Iraq's illegal occupation of Kuwait.

The British Ambassador said his Government had informed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of 10 missing British pilots believed to be prisoners of war in Iraqi hands. As yet, no notification as to their capture and whereabouts had been received by the Red Cross, he said.

In a similar letter to the United Nations, dated 8 February, United States Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering said that the coalition forces had taken every precaution to minimize collateral damage to civilian facilities. Despite the destructive potential of modern warfare, such damage had been extremely limited, he said.

Mr. Pickering further reported that Iraqi aircraft continued to fly to Iran bringing the total of Iraqi airplanes currently in Iran to 130. He said the Iranian Government had given clear assurances that it would detain these aircraft until the conclusion of the current conflict.

The United States Ambassador said he was pleased to report that the flow of oil caused by Iraqi forces from the facilities at al-Ahmadi in Kuwait had been halted. He said the United States was continuing its monitoring of other oil facilities that might be leaking into the waters of the Gulf.

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In other communications, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz has termed the allied bombing of what he called a civilian shelter in Baghdad "deliberate", committed by the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) -- and Zionist forces.

In a letter to the Secretary-General issued yesterday, Mr. Aziz further said that at the time of the bombing there were about 400 civilians, most of them women, children and elderly persons, seeking protection in the shelter.

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DH/830

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/830
19 February 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Ambassador of Soviet Union informs Security Council of meeting between Soviet President and Iraqi Foreign Minister in Moscow yesterday, at which Soviet peace plan, proposing rapid start of withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in accordance with Council resolutions, was presented.

- Secretary-General expresses hope that Soviet peace proposal, conveyed to him by Soviet Ambassador, will facilitate peaceful outcome of Persian Gulf crisis.

- International Committee of the Red Cross expresses concern about plight of civilians in Iraq and Kuwait.

* * *

The Security Council this afternoon held consultations on the Persian Gulf conflict.

The Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, informed Council members of yesterday's talks between the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, at which a Soviet peace proposal was discussed.

He said the talks proceeded from the assumption that the current spiral of the crisis situation in the Persian Gulf called for "immediate and resolute measures to avoid further escalation of the conflict, to save thousands of lives and to prevent the threat of disruption of the ecological balance for the whole region".

The Soviet Ambassador went on to say that President Gorbachev had proposed a plan of specific actions in the course of a "prolonged and meaningful exchange" of views on the military operations and on the whole range of problems that brought about those operations.

He said the plan proceeded from the necessity of strictly abiding by the mandate as envisaged in Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis. The key element of the plan consisted of securing a "rapid start" of a withdrawal

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of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, which would allow an immediate end to the bloodshed.

The Soviet Ambassador expressed the hope that the proposal would be considered in "a most serious manner". His Government was expecting very soon a reaction from Baghdad. Given that reaction, it would be possible to substantively discuss practical measures.

Ambassador Vorontsov said the current situation called for a "cautious, responsible approach. This was not the case for loud and spectacular initiatives, but one for serious diplomatic process". The effectiveness of such a process would determine prospects for a speedy turn towards a political settlement on the basis of Council decisions with due regard to an important role for the Council in maintaining international peace and security.

The Soviet Ambassador told correspondents after the meeting that his Government expected the arrival of Foreign Minister Aziz in Moscow tomorrow, and that it was looking forward to the positive reply of the Iraqi Government.

* * *

A United Nations official announced today that Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar had expressed hope that the Soviet efforts would facilitate the peaceful outcome of the crisis on the basis of Security Council resolutions.

Last night at his residence, the Secretary-General received Ambassador Vorontsov of the Soviet Union, who gave him a confidential letter from Soviet President Gorbachev. The letter given to the Secretary-General was said to be similar to the one handed to the Heads of State or Government of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and China.

The Ambassador also briefed the Secretary-General on the talks held in Moscow between the Iraqi Foreign Minister and President Gorbachev.

* * *

Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Baghdad have reported a steady deterioration in the living conditions of the civilian population.

In a press communique issued yesterday, the Red Cross also expressed concern about the plight of civilians in other parts of Iraq and Kuwait, to which it has not yet had access. The nine-member delegation in Baghdad confirmed that there was a shortage of drinking water because of damage to the supply system, and a lack of fuel and electricity. The group would shortly be carrying out surveys in other major urban areas to gain a more comprehensive picture of the situation.

According to the communique, the Red Cross, which has already sent in two convoys of medicines and medical supplies, is in contact with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and plans to send sanitary engineers and water purification equipment to help counter the growing risk of epidemics.

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DH/831

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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DH/831
20 February 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General calls Soviet peace proposal presented to Iraqi Foreign Minister in Moscow "a unique opportunity".

- Special Committee on Charter debates Soviet proposal to increase roles of regional groups and Secretary-General in maintaining peace and security.

- Chairman of Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons says Gulf war is affecting current negotiations on treaty to ban production, storage and use of such weapons.

- United Nations and Government of the Sudan reach agreement on emergency assistance to that country.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar today, in reply to questions by correspondents, called the Soviet peace plan which was discussed in Moscow on Monday, at a meeting between Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, "a unique opportunity". Commenting on the fact that the Iraqi Minister had not yet given any response, the Secretary-General said it was understandable if the Iraqi authorities might need another 24 hours to make a decision.

In a related development, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait, Mohammad Abulhasan, reacted to the Soviet peace initiative following Security Council consultations yesterday on the Gulf crisis. He told correspondents that before any negotiations could begin, Iraq had to accept all Council resolutions on the matter and certain resolutions in particular, because they had to do with the sovereignty of Kuwait. Only a rapid and massive withdrawal would be accepted by the Kuwaiti Government, he said.

In other news, Cuba has circulated three draft resolutions in the Security Council aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf. The texts were presented during the Council's formal private meetings last week.

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By one text, the Council would establish an ad hoc committee, composed of all 15 Council members, to examine the current situation in the Gulf, and to consider possible formulas for halting armed actions and achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the Council's resolutions on the subject.

By another Cuban text, the Council would demand that the bombings of Iraqi cities be halted immediately. The Council would also request that negotiations be intensified to peacefully resolve the situation without further resort to force.

The third draft resolution would have the Council ask the Secretary-General to renew his mediation efforts without delay.

* * *

Beginning it general debate last Friday, the Special Committee on the Charter and Strengthening the Role of the Organization has been discussing a Soviet proposal which was introduced at its 1990 session.

The Soviet initiative proposed to increase the roles of regional groups and the Secretary-General in maintaining peace and security. It also called for expanding co-operation between regional groups and the United Nations to maintain peace and contain conflicts. It suggested further that the Security Council receive reports on all regional and local conflicts.

In the discussion last Friday of the proposal, two speakers from the Soviet Union said it was firmly based on Articles in the Charter which envisaged the use of regional groups in conflict resolution.

Among those speaking in the general debate yesterday, the representative of Finland, Kari Hakapaa, said the Special Committee should consider the ways and means of enhancing the role of the International Court of Justice in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Suggestions that the Secretary-General might turn to the International Court for advisory opinions deserved attention, he said.

Speaking for Germany, Alex Berg, said one proposal, which involved a new approach to United Nations fact-finding activities and should be expanded, was election-monitoring missions. Such monitoring did not fall under fact-finding, but was rather a part of conflict convention.

The representative of the United Kingdom, Anthony Aust, said the initiative of the Secretary-General to get advisory opinions on cases which might go to the International Court of Justice was of questionable value. The Charter did not provide for such a role for the Secretary-General, he said.

For the United States, Robert Rosenstock said the Soviet proposal contained elements that might be focused upon in more detail. He shared the

hesitations voiced by other delegations on an enhanced role for the Secretary-General in the area of advisory opinions. Efforts at enhancing mechanisms for fact-finding should continue, he said.

On Friday, the representative of Cuba, Rene Mujica Cantelar, urged the Special Committee to examine the voting procedure in the Security Council. He cited particularly the vote on resolution 678 (1990) setting the 15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Referring to the abstention of a permanent Council member in that vote, he said the adoption of the resolution violated Article 27 of the Charter which required affirmative votes by all permanent members on substantive matters.

The representative of the United Kingdom, Anthony Aust, said in reply that the Council had agreed for 40 years that an abstention by a permanent member did not invalidate Council votes.

Also on Friday, the representative of Libya, Abdussalam Sergiwa, outlined a proposal for strengthening the role of the Security Council through suspending or restricting the permanent members' right of veto and not using the principle of consensus in some cases, "to defend acts of aggression, occupation and injustice".

* * *

The Gulf war was having two effects on current negotiations on a chemical weapons treaty that would ban the production, storage and use of such weapons. This was stated yesterday by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Sergei Batsanov of the Soviet Union.

At a press conference in Geneva, he said that on the one hand, the war was showing that the Conference was "rather late in concluding the convention", and that there was a need to eliminate chemical weapons as soon as possible. On the other hand, he said, some States were reserving their position on certain issues pending the outcome of the current conflict in the Gulf.

In any event, Ambassador Batsanov said negotiators were pressing ahead, trying to prepare the ground for a decisive break-through on a treaty this year. The remaining difficulties were of a political nature, directly affecting the security of future States parties to the convention, he said.

* * *

Agreement has been reached on the provision of emergency assistance to the drought-stricken Sudan, where famine threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands.

In a new round of negotiations -- between the Sudanese President, Omer Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir, and the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Decolonization and Trusteeship, James Jonah -- it was agreed that

the United Nations would provide the overall umbrella for emergency and relief operations in the country.

The World Food Programme would manage the port handling and primary transportation of the food aid, and the Sudanese Minister of Commerce would be the focal point for the overall relief operation.

According to the agreement, the Sudanese Government and the United Nations further reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan and its effective functioning.

The agreement follows a recent appeal by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for $110 million to provide basic food relief to an estimated 20 million starving people in Africa.

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